Christianity and African Identity: Against the Incompatibility Thesis

Author
Dr. Ignatius Nnaemeka Onwuatuegwu

Affiliation
Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

ORCID link
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0532-9676

Correspondence to
Dr. Ignatius Nnaemeka Onwuatuegwu

E-mail
in.onwuatuegwu@unizik.edu.ng

Dates
Received: May 25, 2025
Revised: July 22, 2026
Accepted: August 15, 2026
Published: September 2026

How to cite
Onwuatuegwu, I.N. (2026) 'Christianity and African Identity: Against the Incompatibility Thesis', *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 39(1). 10 pages. https://doi.org/10.17159/jsr.v39i1.5064

Article includes
☒ Peer review
☐ Supplementary material

Data availability
☐ Open data set
☒ All data included
☐ On request from author/s
☐ Not available
☐ Not applicable

Editor
Dr. Tristán Kapp

Funding
No funding was received for this article.

Abstract

The paper wants to refute the Incompatibility Thesis which states that there is a fundamental opposition between Christianity and African identity. It argues that the Incompatibility Thesis is based on a colonial simplification of African ontology, a cultural misunderstanding of Christianity, and the conflation of a historical and ontological clash. The paper sketches the Complementary Ontology Thesis, which posits that, at the level of relational being, moral transformation, and communal being, Christianity and African identity are aligned. Methodologically, the study adopts a conceptual-analytic and comparative philosophical approach, employing a critical reconstruction and intercultural analysis. This study employs a relational ontological framework grounded in African philosophy, drawing on the works of Kwasi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, and Thaddeus Metz, and develops this into a Complementary Ontology Thesis as its central analytical model, while situating its argument within broader traditions of relational and speculative metaphysics, drawing comparative insight from Hegel's dialectical idealism and Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy. The argument goes on to reconstruct what is most likely the strongest version of the Incompatibility Thesis, indicate that it fails, and then defend a relational view of complementarity. The paper then concludes that the contradiction, if there is any, between Christianity and African identity, is of a historical and interpretive nature, not an ontological one. It then advances a speculative metaphysical framework grounded in relational ontology, arguing that the convergence between Christianity and African identity is not merely conceptual but structurally embedded in their respective accounts of being. By situating the Complementary Ontology Thesis within broader traditions of speculative philosophy, particularly relational metaphysics, the paper demonstrates that intercultural philosophical systems can achieve a non-reductive convergence without collapsing into assimilation. This contribution positions African philosophy as an active participant in global metaphysical discourse rather than a reactive or derivative tradition. The argument is further situated within broader traditions of relational and speculative metaphysics, engaging Hegel and Whitehead.

Keywords: African philosophy, Christianity, ontology, identity, relationality, Incompatibility Thesis

© 2026. The author/s. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution License.

Introduction: The Incompatibility Thesis

The conflict underlying Christianity and African identity has been described as irreconcilable and unavoidable. Most of the African identity and Christianity conflict focuses on the 'incompatibility of the two'. It has been proposed that Christianity cannot be accepted without the erosion of African identity. This has been the case both in literature and in the realities of several post-colonial African societies.

The Incompatibility Thesis has not been subjected to serious philosophical inquiry. In both theology and philosophy there are many positions that can be described as advocating for this thesis. For example, John Mbiti does not claim incompatibility, but does recognize the friction that exists between the Christian categories and the African religious consciousness, as he observes that the process of conversion often requires the restructuring of one's traditional identity. In the same way, Kwame Bediako maintains that the African Christianity of the early years found itself in a dilemma of the migration and settling of the Christian faith, and was in most instances regarded as discontinuous with the indigenous structures of identity (Bediako, 1995).

In a manner that can be described as being in the same camp, some of the postcolonial theorists have argued that Christianity was a medium for the displacement of African culture, and as a consequence, there is a structural incompatibility with African identity (Mbembe, 2001). These views have developed the notion that Christianity and African identity exist in a relation of contradiction and, at the very least, structural incompatibility.

Most of the literature tends to assume some form of incompatibility based on the history of European colonial subjugation through the spread of Christianity in Africa, often interpreting Christian expansion as a vehicle of cultural displacement and epistemic domination (p'Bitek, 1971; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Fanon, 1963). These interpretations frequently emphasize the destructive consequences of missionary activity on indigenous identity formations, thereby reinforcing the perception of an inherent conflict between Christianity and African identity.

The analysis should be placed in the context of contemporary thinking about religion, identity, and modernity. Recent studies in postcolonial theory and African philosophy have argued that identity is not homogeneous, but rather a dynamic construct that is negotiated in relation to the historical and cultural context in which it is located (Mbembe, 2001, pp. 14-18; Eze, 1997). This insight weakens the Incompatibility Thesis which relies on exclusivity.

At a more rigorous philosophical level, the Incompatibility Thesis presupposes a rigid conception of identity that fails to distinguish between phenomenological identity (historically expressed practices) and ontological identity (the structure of being underlying those practices). African identity, when properly understood, is not reducible to particular ritual forms or historical contingencies but is grounded in a relational ontology that privileges interconnectedness, communal belonging, and moral responsibility (Mbiti, 1969; Gyekye, 1995). Likewise, Christianity, when abstracted from its contingent cultural embodiments, presents a relational metaphysics centered on the interconnectedness of divine, human, and created realities (Plantinga, 2000; Swinburne, 2004).

Christian cultures are empirically observable. When we refer to Christianity in cultures, we are addressing a point in history, more specifically historical Christianity. It is a fact that core metaphysical principles like the belief in a relational God, the God of the covenant, moral enhancement, the God of the interconnected universe (the God of the immanent and transcendent), and the omnipresent God do not find their exclusive articulations and expressions in one specific cultural form. These principles have a trans-cultural structure, therefore disassociating Christianity from its particular cultures. We can thus dissociate Christianity from its recent historical forms as found in Western Europe and Eastern Africa, to name but a few locations, to assess the Christian God and his being outside of the visible historical memorialization in Christianity. The failure to distinguish these levels results in a conceptual error whereby historically contingent tensions are elevated into necessary metaphysical contradictions. A philosophically responsible analysis must therefore operate at the level of ontological structure rather than historical accident.

The Incompatibility Thesis is argued to be based on three inadequate assumptions: First, it confuses historical mediation with philosophical essence; second, it misreads African ontology as static or as operating outside of rational and systematic thought (Wiredu, 2004; Chimakonam, 2019b); and third, it regards Christianity as limited to, or intrinsically tied with Western cultural expressions instead of understanding it as a religion that transcends cultural boundaries (Sanneh, 2009; Bediako, 1995).

The Incompatibility Thesis is supported by three compelling assumptions: First, it makes a conflation between historical mediation and philosophical essence – something that is commonplace among postcolonial critics like Frantz Fanon (1963) and Okot p'Bitek (1971) who interpret Christianity by the mere fact that it was transmitted *via* European colonialism; second, it holds an understanding of African ontology as simple and lacking a rational order and an intellectual system, something that is characteristic of the earliest ethnophilosophical interpretations which, among others, were critiqued by Paulin Hountondji (1983) and appear in the works of Placide Tempels (1959); and finally, it is of the opinion that Christianity is in a close and direct relation with Western cultures and is bound by them, as opposed to a religion that is translatable and capable of cultural permeability which both Lamin Sanneh (2009) and Bediako (1995) are insistent upon.

Method and Research Design

This research employs a conceptual analysis and comparative framework. I have primarily utilized secondary literature with philosophical and theological components. Additionally I engaged with literature in the African philosophical tradition, philosophy of religion, and intercultural philosophy. To draw from these materials, I have assessed their relation to African ontology, Christian metaphysics, and relational theories of being.

This study employs a critical reconstruction method. The Incompatibility Thesis is one of the positions reformulated and subjected to philosophical analysis in its strongest form. The second part of the framework employs a comparative method. This is the African relational philosophical ontology which is in contrast to Christian relational ontology.

Consequently, there are three parts to the framework employed for this study: The first part entails a restatement of the Incompatibility Thesis and the core assumptions; the second part addresses the conceptual, contextual, and historical shortcomings; and the third part addresses the development and validation of the Complementary Ontology Thesis as a relational metaphysics alternative.

Genuine Incompatibility Conditions

In order to analyze the thesis of incompatibility, it is essential to clarify what genuine incompatibility would require. The term 'incompatibility', in relation to two systems, can only be used if one of the following is true:

- *There is an ontological contradiction*: The systems make mutually exclusive claims about what is real.
- *There is an anthropological contradiction*: The systems offer irreconcilable views of the person.
- *There is a normative contradiction*: The systems offer two conflicting moral systems.

If Christianity and African identity are to be understood as completely incompatible, one of these demands must be true. Anthropologically, the African conception of personhood as articulated by Menkiti, emphasizes the development of personhood within a communal matrix (Menkiti, 1984). While Christianity affirms the intrinsic dignity of the individual, it equally emphasizes relational existence through doctrines of love, community, and moral accountability. Rather than contradiction, what emerges is a dialectical complementarity between intrinsic worth and communal realization. However, a close look at these reveals that none of these conditions appear to have relevance.

A deeper ontological analysis reveals that both African philosophy and Christianity operate within frameworks that affirm the primacy of relational being. In African ontology, being is constituted through participation in a network of relations among individuals, ancestors, and the spiritual order (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 108-110). Similarly, Christian metaphysics, particularly in its Trinitarian articulation, conceives of being inherently relational, with divine existence itself structured as relational communion.

Normatively, both traditions converge on a moral vision centered on relational flourishing. African ethics, particularly in its Ubuntu-inspired formulations, emphasizes harmony, solidarity, and communal wellbeing (Metz, 2010). Christian ethics, grounded in *agape* (love), similarly prioritizes relational transformation and moral responsibility. This convergence indicates that the Incompatibility Thesis does not only fail ontologically but also at the level of ethical theory. The convergence, therefore,

suggests not merely superficial similarity but a deeper structural alignment at the level of metaphysical commitment.

Further clarification is needed at this stage. The Incompatibility Thesis assumes that Christianity and African identity must be evaluated as cultural expressions and not deeper ontological layers. This assumption, however, is a significant error. Two systems may be ritualistically, symbolically, and institutionally different without being ontologically disparate. Genuine incompatibility requires a difference and not mere contradiction, that is, the existence of mutually exclusive claims regarding reality, personhood, or morality.

With the distinction clarified, the argumentative burden shifts. The Incompatibility Thesis advocates must prove more than the fact of Christianity's historical displacement of African practices; they must prove that Christianity's core ontological claims are, without exception, dismissive of the relational structure of African being. This stronger claim, however, is seldom defended; it is a plausible, reasoned historical tension, but it cannot really defend itself by being a reasoned historical tension claiming that contradiction is taken to be analytically invalid. Historical antagonism may very well be a symptom of some interpretive or power conflict, but it does not, by its mere existence, imply a definitive ontological inconsistency.

The recent analytic philosophy of religion further illustrates that if one is to assess the so-called contradictions of specific beliefs or systems, there must at least be some logical consistency. Alvin Plantinga, for instance, asserts that the evaluation of philosophical disagreements must at least be framed through a lens of logical contradiction rather than some sociological conflict (Plantinga, 2000, pp. 34-38). So too does Richard Swinburne stress the belief that the 'apparent' inconsistency of two or more systems of belief is, for all practical intents and purposes, a result of a misinterpretation and not a genuine inconsistency (Swinburne, 2004, pp. 12-15). These perspectives illustrate the fact that historical opposition does not equal ontological opposition.

In the articulation of African ontology, Mbiti and Gyekye explain that this ontological structure is, for all practical purposes, of a relational nature, and is able to describe the existence of a network of interrelated beings (Mbiti, 1969, p. 108; Gyekye, 1995, pp. 35-42). In the same, if not similar relational or ontological framework, Christianity also supports the description of being as relational through the being of God, the being of humanity, and the being of creation. Identically, the African conception of the person also underscores the communitarian, relational, and morally responsible nature of being, on the one hand, and the individual and personally dignified and communally responsible, on the other hand – relational dimensions of the being of Christ (Menkiti, 1984).

Lastly, history has indicated that many morally praiseworthy traditions have been distinguished by a center of love being relational, responsible, and transformational (Metz, 2010). If the convergences mentioned above are indeed valid then the *animus* thesis is indefensible at the level of ontology, anthropology, or normativity.

Diagnosing the Failure of the Incompatibility Thesis

The persistence of the Incompatibility Thesis is best explained not by its philosophical strength but by the historical and conceptual distortions that shaped its development. The encounter between Christianity and Africa occurred during the era of colonial expansion. Missionary efforts often presented Christianity through a culturally biased lens, conflating theological commitments with European customs and thereby creating the impression that conversion required the abandonment of African culture.

However, this line of reasoning is based on a mistake. A tradition may be mediated and distorted in multiple ways, but that does not mean that it can be reduced to the historically distorted ways of reception. To derive the colonial situation of transmission as incompatible from a metaphysical standpoint is to confuse the accidental physical embodiment for a necessary thing.

As Wiredu argues, African philosophy, like other disciplines, has to pursue a critical examination of those conceptual schemes that have been imposed upon an area and have blinded it to the potential and existing indigenous (Wiredu, 1998, pp. 21-25). The Incompatibility Thesis is a case in point.

Furthermore, the other source of error is the fallacious view that African ontology is irrational or sub-philosophical. This view has been conclusively discredited by contemporary scholarship. The ontology of Africa is a dynamic and consistent metaphysical system based on a framework of

relationality, spiritual interconnectedness, and moral ownership (Gyekye, 1995, pp. 12-18). In fact, African ethical systems as Metz argues, are not just built on generic principles of relationality and citizenship but on an active promotion of moral value and wellbeing of the community (Metz, 2010).

Recent work in African philosophy continues to affirm the rational and systematic features of African ontology. For Jonathan Chimakonam, African philosophies have an internal logical scaffolding that allows them to engage with the global philosophical community (Chimakonam, 2019a, pp. 22-27). In the same vein, Motsamai Molefe defends the positive normative viewpoint of African ethics, anchored in relational personhood and moral dignity (Molefe, 2020, pp. 45-52). Such contributions demonstrate and illustrate the point that African philosophy and ontology have philosophical depth and rigor. Such a framework has philosophical merit and has constructive engagement with other frameworks.

In addition, an analytic reconstruction further clarifies the analytical error of the Incompatibility Thesis. The argument is as follows: Christianity came with colonial structures, the colonial structures dismembered the African identity, therefore Christianity is incompatible with African identity. This argument is formally invalid. It fails to distinguish a causal conjunction and a conceptual necessity. The presence of A with historical ties to B, does not imply that A necessitates B. For a more analytical reconstruction, one must prove that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are contradictory to the fundamental tenets of African ontology. This, however, has not been done. In fact, the opposite is true. The two frameworks share relational existence, moral responsibility, and community. The Incompatibility Thesis is based not on a contradictory stance, but a poorly constructed argument.

The adaptability of Christianity to various cultures has been explored in modern theology and philosophy of religion. Christianity has been described as a translatable religion, as noted by Walls (2002, pp. 67-72), and has developed strategies to settle in a multitude of rational and societal frameworks. Therefore, it is right to argue that Christianity is not bound by and to Western societal structures.

More fundamentally, the most problematic assumption is that Christianity is Western. Christianity has indicated its historical reach and its adaptability to a myriad of socio-cultural environments. Greco-Roman metaphysics and non-Western frameworks, among others, have been used to analyze Christianity. The central tenets of Christianity can be reframed using a variety of different cultural and philosophical systems. Christianity as a Western phenomenon is a historical rather than a philosophical proposition.

The Complementary Ontology Thesis

With the rejection of the Incompatibility Thesis, we can now state our position. The Complementary Ontology Thesis proposes that Christianity and African identity are compatible at the level of their most profound relational and ontological commitments and not at their historically contingent. This thesis is based on three intertwined arguments: Shared relational ontology, convergent moral frameworks, and trans-cultural flexibility.

Toward a Speculative Relational Metaphysics

The Complementary Ontology Thesis can be extended beyond a descriptive claim into a speculative metaphysical framework. At this level, the argument is no longer merely that Christianity and African identity are compatible, but that both participate in a deeper ontological structure in which relationality constitutes the fundamental category of being.

This position challenges substance-based metaphysics dominant in much of Western philosophy, proposing instead that being is not primarily defined by isolated entities but by networks of relations. Such a framework aligns with contemporary developments in metaphysics and intercultural philosophy, where relational ontology is increasingly recognized as a viable alternative to atomistic models of reality (Chimakonam, 2021). The speculative implication is significant: If relationality is ontologically fundamental, then intercultural philosophical systems are not isolated constructs but expressions of a shared metaphysical horizon.

Shared Relational Ontology

Christianity and African philosophy both acknowledge that the foundation of reality is relational. The African philosophy of being is fundamentally relational among individuals, social units, and the

spiritual. There is a being that is relational among God, humans, and the rest of creation. This shared affirmation substantiates relationality as an ontological foundation in the two traditions.

Intercultural philosophy also advocates for relational ontology as a cross-disciplinary touchpoint. Heinz Kimmerle proposes that philosophical traditions can sustain a dialogic engagement without falling prey to relativism or dissipation (Kimmerle, 2011, pp. 89-94). This further strengthens the potential of complementarity as a cross-cultural philosophy relation framework.

Convergent Moral Frameworks

The two traditions advocate for moral change and human flourishing. While ethics in the African tradition focuses on the community and relationships, in Christianity it is about love and grace, and the ethics of transformation. These ethical focuses each draw from and reinforce the other.

Trans-Cultural Flexibility

Both African ontology and Christianity are not tethered to any one particular culture. African philosophy is adaptable from within and the same can historically be stated for Christianity concerning inculturation. Such flexibility makes it possible to assimilate fully without a loss of the particular.

Strengthening the Complementary Ontology Thesis

The Complementary Ontology Thesis can be stated for the first time in a clean, more rigorous form. Let us take African ontology to mean a relational framework of being as dynamically interdependent, and Christianity to mean a theological framework of relational being among God, humanity, and creation. If neither framework involves the abandonment of relational being, then there is no ontological conflict. Additionally, assuming both frameworks regard moral change as constitutive of human flourishing, then their ethical positions not only integrate but also reinforce one another. The thesis does, therefore, not claim identity, but rather non-contradictory convergence within relational ontology. This formulation maintains definitional clarity while remaining paradoxical. It also evades the reductionist inclination to collapse one framework into the other.

Relational Ontology in Dialogue with Hegelian and Process Thought

To situate the Complementary Ontology Thesis within the broader tradition of speculative philosophy, it is instructive to engage with the works of Hegel and Whitehead, as both of them articulate relational frameworks of being.

In Hegel's speculative idealism, reality is understood as a dynamic process in which being is constituted through relations and mediated through dialectical development (Hegel, 1977). The self is not an isolated substance but emerges through recognition and interaction within a social and historical context. This resonates strongly with African conceptions of personhood, where identity is constituted through communal relations.

Similarly, Whitehead's process philosophy reconceives reality as a series of interrelated events rather than static substances. In this framework, entities are defined by their relations and interactions, and becoming takes precedence over static being (Whitehead, 1978). This processual and relational understanding aligns closely with both African ontology and Christian theological conceptions of relational existence. This implies that reality is not fixed, isolated, or self-contained; it is rather constantly unfolding and interconnected.

The integration of these perspectives strengthens the Complementary Ontology Thesis by demonstrating that relational ontology is not confined to African or Christian thought but is a globally significant metaphysical paradigm. This triangulation – African ontology, Christian theology, and speculative philosophy – reveals a shared commitment to relational being as the foundation of reality. It therefore situates the thesis within a broader philosophical tradition while preserving its intercultural distinctiveness.

Objections and Responses

A defensible philosophical position must advance a thesis and withstand significant counterarguments. Here, I reconstruct and respond to three major counterarguments to the Complementary Ontology Thesis. At a higher level of philosophical scrutiny, objections to the Complementary Ontology Thesis can be interpreted as challenges to relational metaphysics itself. These objections often presuppose a

substance-based ontology in which systems must either collapse into identity or remain in contradiction. The present argument, however, rejects this binary and proposes a third alternative: Non-reductive convergence within a relational framework.

Objection 1: Christianity is Inseparable from Colonial Domination

Some scholars argue that Christianity in Africa cannot be articulated without its colonial entanglements. This suggests that Christianity is not just historically associated with colonialism, but is, in a more structural sense, implicated in the disintegration of an African self. If this is true, then any justification of the Christianity/African ontology relation is philosophically flawed.

Response: This objection conflates the historical relay of a phenomenon and its conceptual framework. The fact that Christianity was spread under colonial conditions does not mean that its fundamental metaphysical or moral tenets are anti-African. To historically affect a philosophical system is to make a categorical mistake. A system's philosophical worth is embedded in its understanding, not in the historical context of its genesis. Additionally, many African philosophers argue that the colonial baggage need not accompany the imported ideas (Wiredu, 1998, pp. 23-25). Once this distinction is drawn, Christianity can be assessed on its own, without regard to its history. Therefore, colonial history may be morally relevant, but it cannot preclude ontological compatibility.

This distinction has support in postcolonial thought. Achille Mbembe contends that colonial encounters produce fractured, distorted self-representations of both the colonizer and the colonized (Mbembe, 2001, pp. 102-108). Understanding this distortion allows for the philosophical content to be liberated from its historical overlay.

Intensifying the Colonial Objection

One could say that the most significant flaw of the reasoning involving mediation and essences is the oversimplification of both. Some may argue that the fact of repeated historical relations could become constitutive, and that Christianity as a practice is inextricably linked with colonialism. In this perspective, the very nature that Christianity has assumed in the African context makes it fundamentally about colonialism.

While the criticism points to a valid sociological fact, it misses the mark on philosophical reasoning. One cannot say that a system of thought is devoid of a constitutive element simply because it has been consistently misused. To state that is to overlook the distinction between regulative ideal and empirical fact, making critical engagement impossible within a system.

Objection 2: Complementarity Collapses African Distinctiveness

Another criticism is that the Complementarity Ontology Thesis does not sufficiently treat African thought, and if African ontology is stated to 'align' with Christian theology, African thought may be regarded as valuable only insofar as it draws close to Christianity. From this perspective, it could be argued that the idea of complementarity is a form of ideational colonialism.

Response: This critique would be valid if complementarity involved some form of simplification or absorption. However, the thesis being defended here explicitly opposes such simplification. The way in which complementarity is being used here is neither a claim of identity nor simplification, but a claim of non-contradictory coalescence. It posits that two systems may be in agreement on certain ontological aspects while preserving a real divergence in their conceptual frameworks.

Christianity neither completes African philosophy, nor does it necessarily require validation from it. However, both Christianity and African philosophy offer the possibility of understanding relationality, moral transformation, and community. Added to this, the meaning of African philosophy in Christianity is bidirectional. African philosophy fosters an understanding of community, personhood, and moral responsibility within the African conception of Christianity. The Complementary Ontology Thesis maintains difference without contradiction.

Concerns regarding assimilation can also be addressed through modern intercultural philosophy, which prioritizes mutual transformation over unilateral absorption (Kimmerle, 2011, pp. 95-101). This illustrates the claim that complementarity maintains difference while fostering dialogue.

Complementarity and Asymmetry

Further clarification is necessary regarding asymmetry. Complementarity should not be regarded as a one-way process in which African philosophy is subsumed to Christian thought. It is an interpretive movement in both directions. In African contexts, Christian concepts of divine providence, sin, and salvation are frequently remodeled within relational and community frameworks. This illustrates that complementarity functions as a dynamic process rather than a static hierarchy. This means that the Complementary Ontology Thesis does not favor one system over the other. It creates space for mutual understanding, where both systems can shed light on and change the other.

Objection 3. The Argument Idealizes African Ontology

The third objection argues that the idealized image of African ontology as internally consistent and unified is a potential risk. The diversity within the African tradition makes any reference to an 'African ontology' an overly simplified notion.

Response: Although this objection indicates greater concern, it still warrants consideration for this argument. It is not suggested that all African traditions are the same or that there is not some level of internal conflict. It is, however, suggested that a discernible and identifiable range of philosophical thinking, especially the focus on relational being and a personhood of the community, is present within a substantial amount of African philosophical thinking. Philosophical reconstruction does not require the totality; it does need a defensible conceptual framework that is situated within a traceable intellectual tradition. This framework is supported by scholars like Mbiti, Gyekye, and Wiredu (Mbiti, 1969; Gyekye, 1995; Wiredu, 1996). Therefore, although African ontology is diverse, it is not conceptually chaotic.

Internal Diversity and Conceptual Unity

The African philosophy's diversified ontology does not weaken the argument. The philosophical examination does not need complete homogeneity, rather, it is the identifiable thought patterns that are of importance. The relational conception of being, the focus on communal personhood, and the inclusion of the moral and the metaphysical dimensions are an example of specific patterns. The features are of sufficient strength to provide a basis for theoretical reconstruction. The Complementary Ontology Thesis is not a claim about the totality of African traditions, but a defensible strand of the African philosophy that is highly documented within the present-day scholarship.

Philosophical Payoff and Theoretical Significance

The rejection of the Incompatibility Thesis and the defense of the Complementary Ontology Thesis lead to several important philosophical implications. The far-reaching consequences of this argument correctly reflect a growing tendency in the recent globalization of philosophy and attempts to integrate non-Western traditions into the dominant discourse. As Chimakonam (2021, pp. 5-9) rightly posits, African philosophy can construct new frameworks that constitute a turn in the global discourse.

Reframing the Debate

It is now well established that the dominant anti-African philosophy (or Christianity) position is fundamentally flawed. There is no need for the debate to continue in a combative manner.

Broadened Ontological Engagement

The Complementary Ontology Thesis offers a unique perspective to the global discourse on the relationality of ontologies. It expands the reach of relationality beyond the individualist, dominant metaphysics of global philosophy.

Global Philosophical Implications

This analysis transcends the case for Christianity and African identity. It critiques the global philosophy tendency toward exclusivist frameworks that assume traditions can only be in a state of assimilation or conflict. The Complementary Ontology Thesis demonstrates the possibility of non-contradictory convergence, providing a framework for intercultural philosophical engagement that is neither relativistic nor reductionistic. This suggests that philosophical traditions can engage constructively

while still preserving their identities, thereby enriching philosophy and embodying the pluralistic and dialogical spirit of the framework.

Decolonizing Conceptual Analysis

The argument moves forward with the project of conceptual decolonization, demonstrating that philosophical analysis must clear the binaries and engage the traditions on their own terms.

Originality and Contribution to Speculative Philosophy

This paper makes a distinct contribution to speculative philosophy by advancing what may be termed a 'Relational-Convergence Ontology' – a metaphysical framework that demonstrates how distinct philosophical and religious traditions can achieve non-contradictory alignment without reduction or assimilation. Unlike prevailing approaches that frame intercultural encounters in terms of conflict or synthesis, this framework introduces a third model grounded in relational metaphysics, where convergence occurs at the level of ontological structure rather than conceptual identity. By integrating African philosophy, Christian theology, and speculative traditions such as Hegelian dialectics and process philosophy, the paper positions African thought as a generative force within global metaphysical discourse. It thus contributes not only to debates on religion and identity but also to the broader project of reconfiguring metaphysics in a pluralistic and intercultural philosophical landscape.

Final Analytic Closure

The argument can be presented as follows: If incompatibility exists and there is a need for ontological, anthropological, or normative contradictions, and Christianity and African identity do not demonstrate that, then the theory of incompatibility is incorrect. What exists is not a necessary antagonism but a historically situated tension which can be alleviated through a clarification of the theory. The Complementary Ontology Thesis does exactly that, indicating that the relational is a common ground for both the traditions.

Conclusion

The objective of the projection is to determine whether the historical possibility of the tension between Christianity and African religions sits on the former substantive notion accepting Christianity as a religion and African religions as a people epistemic in terms of religion as a way of life. The projection indicates that adherence to the incompatibility posits the speaker's intellectual and methodological shortcomings, and thereby the inability to articulate the historical mediation, as opposed to the frameworks of ontology.

One of the remaining pivotal contributions still awaiting to be articulated therefore is the Complementary Ontology Thesis. At one end, it indicates that Christianity and African religions sit at the same point of relationality, community, and moral growth, and can therefore not be in opposition at the supramundane level, and as such, cannot be in opposition at the supramundane level of relationality. As such, it suggests that the tension in relation to Christianity and African religions is historical and interpretative.

The study is primarily a philosophical reconstruction of Christianity and Africanism. Although the scope of the study is primarily a philosophical reconstruction of Christianity and Africanism, it also encompasses the cross-cultural philosophies of religion in that it demonstrates that a genuine convergence of philosophies is possible without totality to the systems of philosophies.

References

Bediako, K. (1995) *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a Non-Western religion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Chimakonam, J. O. (2019a) 'African philosophy and global epistemic justice', *Filosofia Theoretica*, 8(2), pp. 22-30.

Chimakonam, J. O. (2019b) 'African philosophy and the challenge of rationality', *Filosofia Theoretica*, 8(2), pp. 1-19.

Chimakonam, J. O. (2021) *Conversational philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Eze, E. C. (1997) The color of reason. In Eze, E. C. ed.: *Postcolonial African philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 312-320.
Fanon, F. O. (1963) *The wretched of the Earth*. Farrington, C. (trans.). New York: Grove Press.
Gyekye, K. (1995) *An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Hegel, G. W. F. (1977) *Phenomenology of spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Hountondji, P. J. (1983) *African philosophy: Myth and reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Kimmerle, H. (2011) *Intercultural philosophy*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
Mbembe, A. (2001) *On the postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Mbiti, J. S. (1969) *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann.
Menkiti, I. A. (1984) Person and community in African traditional thought. In Wright, R. A. ed.: *African philosophy: An introduction*. Lanham: University Press of America, pp. 171-181.
Metz, T. (2010) 'African and Western moral theories in a bioethical context', *Developing World Bioethics*, 10(1), pp. 49-58. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-8847.2009.00273.x
Molefe, M. (2020) 'African ethics and the question of personhood', *Philosophia*, 48(1), pp. 45-60. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46519-3_1
Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. (1986) *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. London: James Currey.
p'Bitek, O. (1971) *African religions in Western scholarship*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.
Plantinga, A. (2000) *Warranted Christian belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/0195131932.001.0001
Sanneh, L. (2009) *Translating the message: The missionary impact on culture*. 2nd ed. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
Swinburne, R. (2004) *The existence of God*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199271672.001.0001
Tempels, P. (1959) *Bantu philosophy*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
Walls, A. F. (2002) *The cross-cultural process in Christian history*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
Whitehead, A. N. (1978) *Process and reality*. New York: Free Press.
Wiredu, K. (1996) *Cultural universals and particulars: An African perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. https://doi.org/10.2979/1448.0
Wiredu, K. (1998) Toward decolonizing African philosophy. In Eze, E. C. ed.: *African philosophy: An anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 17-46. https://doi.org/10.1177/039219219804618416
Wiredu, K. (2004) Introduction: African philosophy in our time'. In Wiredu, K. ed.: *A companion to African philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470997154.ch1